Djibril Chimère Diaw

Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Demographic Transitions in Global Perspective :

Africa South of the Sahara, India, China, and the West (1950–2100)

Djibril Chimère DIAW

Copyright

Demographic Transitions in Global Perspective: Africa South of the Sahara, India, China, and the West (1950–2100)

Copyright © 2026 Djibril Chimère DIAW

All rights reserved

About The Author

Djibril Chimère Diaw

Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

Dedication

To

my mother Marème Fall

my father Amadou Chimère Diaw

my wife Isabelle Diaw

my children

Fatou-Chimère Diaw, Ahmadou-Chimère Diaw,

Marième-Chimère Diaw, Aïssata-Chimère Diaw .

my grandparents

Fatou Methiour Ndiaye & Waly Sega Fall

Fatou Faye & Souleymane Chimère Diaw

Teachers

To those who shall come into the world a century after me, beginning in the year two thousand and seventy-two.

To all mothers,
to those who made our coming into the world possible through the gift of themselves,
to those who, even today, carry, give birth to, nourish, protect, and raise life,
to those who, tomorrow, will continue to open the path of human existence.

To all women who, in silence or in light, have risked their bodies, their strength, and sometimes their lives so that humanity may endure.
To their quiet courage, their daily resilience, and their founding love.

May this work stand as an act of recognition,
a tribute passed on from generation to generation,
and a word of gratitude addressed to those without whom nothing would have been, nothing is, and nothing will be.

CONTENTS

Demographic Transitions in Global Perspective :....1
Africa South of the Sahara, India, China, and the West (1950–2100)....1
Copyright....2
About The Author....3
Dedication....5
ENGLISH....8
Editorial Preface....8
General Introduction....9
Comparative Demographic Transition and Global Population Rebalancing (1950–2100)....10
Abstract....10
1. Introduction....11
2. Data and Methodology....12
2.1 Data Source....12
2.2 Regional Definitions and Terminology....12
2.3 Analytical Approach....12
3. Empirical Results: Population Dynamics Since 1950....13
3.1 Long-Term Population Growth Patterns....13
3.2 Comparative Stages of Demographic Transition....13
4. Projections to 2100: A Rebalancing of Global Demographic Weight....14
5. Discussion....15
5.1 Economic and Social Implications....15
5.2 Global Governance and Representation....15
6. Conclusion....16
Transversal Conclusion....17

ENGLISH

Editorial Preface

This book is grounded in a simple yet demanding premise: that long-term empirical evidence must remain central to the analysis of global transformations. In an era marked by rapid narratives, fragmented indicators, and short-term perspectives, demographic facts offer a uniquely stable foundation for understanding the deep forces reshaping the world.

Drawing exclusively on the official data of the United Nations *World Population Prospects 2024* and the World Bank's national accounts, this volume brings together a series of comparative studies devoted to population dynamics and their long-run implications. Its geographical focus spans Africa south of the Sahara, Europe and Northern America, India, and China—regions whose demographic trajectories are central to the global reconfiguration of the twenty-first century.

The chapters collected here challenge several implicit assumptions that continue to shape academic and policy debates. Africa south of the Sahara is often portrayed as an exceptional case, detached from historical regularities and global patterns. By situating African demographic trends within a comparative and historical framework, this book demonstrates that population growth, transition, and deceleration are neither anomalies nor isolated phenomena, but integral components of broader demographic processes observed across regions and over time.

Rather than advancing normative prescriptions or speculative projections, the contributions in this volume adhere to a rigorous methodological stance. The analyses privilege transparent indicators, consistent definitions, and long temporal horizons. This approach allows readers to engage directly with the data, to reassess dominant narratives, and to formulate their own interpretations of demographic change and its consequences.

Ultimately, this book is intended as a tool for scholars, students, and decision-makers seeking to understand how demographic dynamics shape economic capacity, social organization, and geopolitical balance. By restoring empirical continuity and comparative perspective to the study of population, it aims to contribute to a more informed and nuanced understanding of the transformations that will define the decades ahead.

General Introduction

Population constitutes one of the deepest foundations of long-term economic, social, and political transformations. Its size, growth, and age structure shape development trajectories, labor market dynamics, education and health systems, as well as balances of power at the international level. Yet, despite the abundance of studies devoted to global demography, certain regions continue to be analyzed through partial frameworks or inherited narratives that are rarely confronted systematically with long-run data.

This volume adopts a resolutely empirical approach. It brings together a series of articles based exclusively on the official data of the United Nations *World Population Prospects 2024*, covering the period from 1950 to the present, as well as projections through the end of the twenty-first century. Its objective is simple yet ambitious: to reposition the demographic evolution of Africa south of the Sahara within a global comparative perspective, by confronting it with the trajectories of Europe and Northern America, India, and China.

Africa south of the Sahara is too often portrayed as a demographically homogeneous space, characterized by “excessive” or “problematic” population growth, without this growth being rigorously contextualized within global demographic history. Yet every region that is industrialized today has experienced, at different paces, phases of rapid population expansion before reaching regimes of low fertility and population aging. This book seeks to reintegrate Africa into this historical continuity, without exceptionalism and without minimization.

The chapters that follow successively examine the evolution of total population, growth rates, stages of the demographic transition, and long-term projections. By adopting a comparative structure and a transparent methodology, the volume aims to move beyond fixed representations and to offer a fact-based reading. The purpose is not to predict a predetermined future, but to show how the demographic dynamics observed today are already reshaping the balance of the world of tomorrow.

Comparative Demographic Transition and Global Population Rebalancing (1950–2100)

Evidence from United Nations World Population Prospects 2024

Abstract

Demographic transition constitutes one of the most profound structural transformations shaping long-term economic, social, and geopolitical dynamics. Using official data from the United Nations World Population Prospects 2024, this article provides a comparative analysis of population trajectories from 1950 to 2024—and projections to 2100—for four major regions and countries: Africa south of the Sahara, Europe and Northern America, India, and China. The results highlight a pronounced divergence in demographic regimes. While Europe and Northern America and China have entered advanced stages of demographic aging and population decline, Africa south of the Sahara remains in an early to intermediate phase of demographic transition, characterized by sustained population growth. India occupies an intermediate position, with population growth slowing but remaining positive through mid-century. These contrasting trajectories imply a profound rebalancing of global demographic weight over the twenty-first century, with significant implications for economic development, labor markets, political representation, and global governance.

Keywords: demographic transition; population growth; Africa south of the Sahara; India; China; Europe and Northern America; United Nations; World Population Prospects.

1. Introduction

Demography has long been recognized as a foundational determinant of economic and social development. Population size, growth rates, and age structures shape labor supply, consumption patterns, fiscal sustainability, and geopolitical influence. Yet comparative demographic analyses often privilege national case studies or focus narrowly on fertility and mortality indicators, rather than examining long-run population trajectories across major world regions.

This article adopts a strictly empirical and comparative perspective. It asks a simple but consequential question: **how have the population dynamics of Africa south of the Sahara evolved since 1950 relative to those of Europe and Northern America, India, and China, and how are they expected to evolve over the remainder of the twenty-first century?**

The objective is not to rank regions normatively, but to document structural demographic transformations using a harmonized and authoritative data source. By situating Africa south of the Sahara within a global comparative framework, the analysis contributes to a more balanced understanding of global demographic change.

2. Data and Methodology

2.1 Data Source

All population data used in this study are drawn from the **United Nations World Population Prospects 2024 (WPP 2024)**, produced by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

The analysis relies on:

- **Total population estimates**,
- **As of 1 July of each year**,
- **Expressed in thousands of persons**,
- Covering the period **1950–2024**, with projections to **2100** based on the UN medium-variant scenario.

The use of the 1 July reference date follows UN methodological conventions and ensures international comparability.

2.2 Regional Definitions and Terminology

In UN datasets, the region commonly designated as *Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA)* refers to all African countries located south of the Sahara Desert. In this article, the expression **"Africa south of the Sahara"** is used as a descriptive equivalent, while fully corresponding to the UN regional classification.

The other entities analyzed are:

- **Europe and Northern America** (UN regional aggregate),
- **India** (country),
- **China** (country).

2.3 Analytical Approach

The study proceeds in three steps:

1. Descriptive analysis of historical population trends (1950–2024);
2. Comparative assessment of demographic transition stages;
3. Examination of projected population trajectories to 2100 and their structural implications.

No statistical modeling is introduced beyond the official UN projections; the emphasis is on empirical transparency and comparability.

3. Empirical Results: Population Dynamics Since 1950

3.1 Long-Term Population Growth Patterns

In 1950, Europe and Northern America represented the largest population aggregate among the four entities considered, with approximately **592 million inhabitants**, followed by China (**544 million**), India (**357 million**), and Africa south of the Sahara (**178 million**).

By 2024, the global demographic landscape has been fundamentally transformed:

- **Africa south of the Sahara** has expanded more than sevenfold, reaching **1.25 billion** inhabitants;
- **India** has grown to **1.44 billion**, becoming the most populous country in the world;
- **China** has reached **1.42 billion**, after decades of rapid growth now followed by stagnation;
- **Europe and Northern America** has grown modestly to **1.14 billion**, with growth largely driven by migration rather than natural increase.

These figures reveal a clear divergence in demographic momentum across regions.

3.2 Comparative Stages of Demographic Transition

The observed trajectories correspond to distinct stages of the demographic transition:

- **Europe and Northern America** exhibit characteristics of a post-transition regime: low fertility, population aging, and near-zero or negative natural growth.
- **China** has completed its demographic transition rapidly, entering a phase of population decline driven by sustained low fertility and aging.
- **India** occupies an intermediate position, with declining fertility but continued population growth projected until mid-century.
- **Africa south of the Sahara** remains in an earlier phase of the transition, with fertility rates declining gradually but remaining well above replacement level, resulting in continued rapid population growth.

4. Projections to 2100: A Rebalancing of Global Demographic Weight

UN medium-variant projections indicate that these divergent trajectories will intensify over the remainder of the century.

By **2050**, Africa south of the Sahara is projected to reach approximately **2.1 billion inhabitants**, surpassing both India and China. By **2100**, its population is expected to exceed **3.3 billion**, accounting for a substantial share of global population growth.

In contrast:

- **Europe and Northern America** are projected to experience gradual population decline;
- **China's population** is expected to contract sharply, falling below **650 million by 2100**;
- **India's population** is projected to peak mid-century and then decline moderately.

These projections imply a historic shift in the geographical distribution of global population.

5. Discussion

5.1 Economic and Social Implications

Demographic trends have far-reaching implications for:

- labor force dynamics,
- education and health systems,
- fiscal sustainability,
- patterns of consumption and investment.

For Africa south of the Sahara, sustained population growth presents both opportunities—such as a potential demographic dividend—and challenges related to employment, urbanization, and human capital formation.

5.2 Global Governance and Representation

Demographic weight increasingly shapes political and institutional influence at the global level. As population shares shift, pressures are likely to grow for reforms in international governance structures, representation, and resource allocation.

Ignoring these demographic realities risks perpetuating analytical frameworks rooted in outdated global distributions.

6. Conclusion

Based on authoritative United Nations data, this article demonstrates that the world is undergoing a profound demographic rebalancing. Africa south of the Sahara has moved from demographic marginality in 1950 to becoming the central locus of global population growth in the twenty-first century.

These transformations challenge persistent narratives that frame Africa as demographically peripheral. Instead, they underscore the necessity of integrating African demographic dynamics into global economic, social, and political analyses. A rigorous engagement with population data reveals not a continent on the margins, but one at the core of the world's demographic future.

Acknowledgments:
The author acknowledges the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs for making the World Population Prospects 2024 dataset publicly available.

Transversal Conclusion

The analyses presented in this volume converge toward a central finding: the world is undergoing a profound demographic transformation, marked by an increasing divergence of regional trajectories. While Europe and Northern America, as well as China, have entered advanced phases of population aging and stagnation—or even demographic decline—Africa south of the Sahara remains the principal driver of global population growth in the twenty-first century.

These developments constitute neither an anomaly nor a historical rupture. They are consistent with the well-documented logic of the demographic transition, whose pace and timing vary according to economic, social, and institutional contexts. What the United Nations data reveal, however, is the magnitude of the shift underway: an increasing share of humanity will live in Africa south of the Sahara in the future, while the relative demographic weight of historically dominant regions will decline.

This finding carries several transversal implications. From an analytical standpoint, it calls for a revision of comparative frameworks that continue to treat Africa as a peripheral space, even as its demographic importance becomes central. From an economic and social perspective, it underscores the urgency of challenges related to education, employment, urbanization, and health in a context of rapid growth of the working-age population. From a political and institutional perspective, it raises the question of adapting global governance mechanisms to a profoundly renewed demographic distribution.

Far from any normative or alarmist interpretation, this volume advocates an approach grounded in data, comparison, and the long run. Understanding the demographic transition of Africa south of the Sahara does not consist in projecting judgments onto it, but in recognizing that it constitutes one of the structuring phenomena of the twenty-first century. As such, it deserves to be analyzed not at the margins, but at the very center of reflections on the future of the world.